

BETTER BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR ILLUSTRATORS

—PRITI*

The magnificently American built India International Centre off Lodhi Road in Delhi, is an all time strong contestant for exhibitions and shows, whose organisers aspire to something more than mere display and sale. The Centre offers the type of quiettude and serenity which any city individual hankers after—and may not necessarily get.

Should a children's book illustrator play second fiddle to a publisher? Should he/she be denied the right to hold the copyright to his/her illustration? Should the illustrator who is painter also, not have the right to exhibit his/her illustration for public viewing? Should an illustrator not have the right to his name against the illustration or in the book itself?

And when things like beautiful books for children turn up, then the human sensitivities respond that much significantly.

On November 16 began a three-day seminar, "Better books for children". Hosts and organisers: the "Association of Writers & Illustrators for Children" which has for its headquarters on Children's Book Trust premises on Bahadur shah Zafar Marg and whose Executive Trustee, Mr. M. K. Shankar Pillai, founded the AWIC on March 7, 1981.

The Indian children's book illustrator is far from being "enviably-placed." His scenario fulfills to the "dot" the above — mentioned miseries. The world platform sees him as a "factor to be reckoned with". This has paved the way for the justified and the imperative need that the "no rights" programmes be replaced by the "all rights" ones.

One of the Seminar highlights was the exhibition of original art work by book illustrators. The first-of-its-kind exhibition in the country, a total of 24 illustrators who form the cream of their field and amongst whom is Satyajit Ray and Shankar K. Pillai were represented by a "fragment" sample of 28 panels of about 71 illustrations. The varying elitist styles and artist's attitudes spoke volumes for the hands behind the work. Every illustrator on his professional build-up stands on his own pedestal. The illustrations on display brought into focus the difficult arena of his involvement—children's literature. Against a reflective back-drop of white walls, cream curtains and soft green druggel, the subtle illustrations made their impact straightaway. Mrs. Sujasha Dasgupta's illustration which is carried on Mamoni's adventure book cover has the poignancy of wide-eyed wonder. Mr. Pulak Biswas' elephant baby in the pool and surrounded by delighted children

*"Priti" has been active in the fields of painting, culturing, journalism, writing (Author of 3 books) Interior Design and Showroom Decor — She specialises in Indian Sweets. She loves playing piano.

is a work of pure joy, Mr. Phalguni Das Gupta's folk art elements with their powerful colour blends are mature creativity. Mr. Soumitro Sarkar's two children agape at the wonder of a jewel box in the cave is ease, grace and delicacy. Mr. Abid Surti's dominating purples, pinks and yellows—all in combination with a jolly, cavaliering world is a work of contemporary relevance. Geeta Vadhera has given strong white backgrounds as massive space and woven colours in the manner of a texture. Sujata Sett's paper so full of congested embroidered effects is indeed minutely handled and with perfected telling effect.

That the illustrators are obliged to fulfill their job demands as mere robots has been evident even whilst the Exhibition was under preparation. The publishers made their "stony and non-cooperative" attitudes felt on the Association of Writers & Illustrators for Children (the organisers) and who would have been surely unseated had they been less determined.

It is not possible to do justice to all, but may it suffice that no illustrator was overlooked, space permitting. Next comes a question: Why at all this exhibition? For answer, the calendar moves back to April 6, 1989 and to Bologna in Italy which was the venue for the world's biggest International Children's Book Fair. The AWIC was invited to participate with books and original illustrations. Fifteen illustrators' work was taken for viewing. Top publishers of 58 countries had their taste of the displayed work. The exhibition was an instant success. Many illustrators were besieged for assignments.

The challenge for the organisers was monumental. The illustrators' works were scattered far and wide. Furthermore was the demand from the publishers that the insurance be taken by the organisers. A negligible number of 3 publishers out of the wide range came to their assistance.

A renewed invitation to the AWIC now rests for the next fair of next year. The triumphant return to home country and the halo acquired by the Indian illustrators of children's books spurred the AWIC to organise the November 16 show for Delhi-ites. Their ambition now runs into the years ahead as an annual exhibition will be projected by turns in all the metropolises of the country. "Indians must become aware that their children's book-illustrators' have the potential and the parallel recognition with the best abroad, where the measurement is by the highest standards possible", says the AWIC spokeswoman Manorama Jafa.

The illustrators of this November 16 show:

MICKEY PATEL'S capping glories are both on the home and international fronts. The latter shows him the recipient of prestigious honours as the Excellency Prize of the Yomuri International Cartoons Contest, Tokyo, and others of similar standard. India's National Awards by the relevant Agencies have come to him. Mickey was born in Karachi in 1941. A graduate in Economics from Sh. Stephen's the professional arena opened for him in 1955.

TAPAS GUHA'S success though no less in the fields of his routine work, that of illustrating for magazines, books and newspapers has perhaps been at its most triumphant in the comic strips for children he has created. Tapas' post-graduation in Commerce from Delhi University led him on to free-lancing.

SIGRUN SRIVASTAV has a monumental build-up to her talents. She is painter, sculptress and writer. Though the recognition in correct measure has followed her in all her activities, it is in writing today, that Sigrun stands excelled. Sigrun has received training in writing at the Institute of Children's Literature, Connecticut, USA. The Government College of Arts and

Crafts, Calcutta, has given her the study in painting.

PULAK BISWAS has reason to be proud of his achievements. The grand Honorary Diploma at the Biennale of Illustrators, Bratislava, counts for one. The Award of UNESCO Fellowship in illustration graphics design for study at Hornsey College, London/Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam, for another and innumerable forays into the arena of exhibitions and group shows at Chandigarh and Delhi. Pulak is a diploma holder of the College of Art and Craft, Calcutta.

SUJATA SINGH correctly visualised the acquiring of a Diploma in Graphic Design and Illustration from the Wimbledon School of Art and Design, London, as one of the keys to her success. She is well on the right track it seems as she has been in evidence at group shows such as at the Illustrators' Gallery, London, the Delhi Artists Annual by the Sahitya Kala Parishad, the Young Artists Group show and the Rashtriya Kala Mela at Bhawalpur House. Sujata is a graduate from Lady Sri Ram College, Delhi.

SUDDHRASATTWA BASU'S creativity has found its release at the hands of book designing and illustrating. In the children's field, his illustrations have been significantly utilised by well-known publishing houses of the country. Suddhrasattwa is a graduate in Fine Arts from the College of Arts and Crafts Calcutta.

REBOTI BHUSHAN GHOSH'S skills for child readers is synonymous with his highly popular illustrations in the books "The Clever Calf", "The Dancing Mule" and "Leelu-Peele". Reboti's career launching was, however, in an adult-oriented field—that of illustrating political and social cartoons in magazines with his specialisation in humorous cartoons. Reboti is a graduate in Sanskrit from the Surendranath College (formerly Rupin).

SUBIR ROY'S work earned him a special

mention in BIB in Bratislava. As a specialist in the field of children's book illustrations, he has won assignments from UNICEF and leading book publishers in India. Subir is a graduate in Applied Art from Government College of Art, Delhi.

PHALGUNI DAS GUPTA'S illustrating ambitions have taken him far into the field of participation in international book fairs abroad. These have been in Bologna, Italy, Suffolk, England and the Noma Illustrations Competition, Japan. He is a graduate from the College of Art and Craft, Calcutta and has held innumerable one-man shows at Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta to his credit.

SWAPAN SARKAR is an oils and water colour specialist. His earlier art teaching programmes at schools gave way to the other and more satisfying field of freelance illustrating for publishers and agencies in the field. He holds a Diploma in Fine Arts from the Government College of Arts and Crafts, Calcutta.

MRINAL MITRA'S professional platform is studded with the what's what of the recognition on the international illustrations front. The BBC summer story in 1989 was preceded by his participation in the prestigious exhibition of 1988 the Biennale Graphics Internationals in Czechoslovakia. The year 1984 saw the International Award of Japan come to him and 1983 was home front National Book Trust Award. Mrinal completes an all-round exposure to experiences gained as pavilions designer, model artist and muralist. Mrinal has been associated with leading magazines. He has studied at the College of Commercial Art.

B. G. VERMA has to his credit illustrations in nearly 150 books by well known publishers. The stamps arena has seen him design on blood donation and the Montreal Olympics. His current assignments as a free lancer have been preceded by work exposures in the field in the Middle East.

MALA MARWAH'S association with the

field of illustrating has seen a significant academic work exposure. The Lalit Kala Akademi took her on as an Assistant Editor and the Faculty of Fine Arts, M. S. University, Baroda, as a lecturer in History of Art and Aesthetics. A Master's degree from the Faculty of Fine Arts and Crafts has armed Mala to successfully conducted short courses on the subject. These have been borne out at the Film and TV Training Institute, Pune.

SATYAJIT RAY who wields unquestioned power as a film director, is not lesser known as a story-writer and illustrator. Children have responded enthusiastically to his magazine *Sandesh*, which has been written, edited and illustrated by him. Satyajit's art study at Kala Bhavan at Santiniketan was at the feet of 'gurus' like Nandlal Bose and Vinod Behari Mukherjee. Earlier, education was acquired at the Presidency College, Calcutta. Satyajit's career beginnings were with two leading art agencies.

SUJATA SETT'S field of specialisation which is that of Lay-out Art has seen her at the helm of Advertising and Sales Promotion companies as also scientific institutes. Sujata is now a free lance artist. Her five-year diploma course in Commercial Art from the Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta, was followed by a Creative Art and Photographay course from Bal Bhavan, which later took her as an instructor.

AMIT SRIVASTAV is today engaged in using his skills for animation cartoon films, on environment and national integration. A free lance illustrator and with 24 books for children to his credit, his association has been with leading private publishers. The DAVP First Prize (1984) came to him for the design of "Shishu Geet". Amit has a solid work base. The year 1980 saw him arrive from the Lucknow University

armed with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts.

JAGDISH JOSHI is both writer and illustrator of children's books. His contributions in the field have brought him laurels at home and abroad. The second prize in the NOMA CONCORD 1980 and preceding National Awards by the Government of India 1974 and followed by first prizes in 1975 and 1984. Jagdish's participation in the first training seminar on Children's Book Production and Publication organised by UNESCO at Tokyo and several other workshops saw him invited as resource person and expert. Jagdish has his diploma in Fine Arts from Indian College of Art and Draughtsmanship, Calcutta.

VANDANA JOSHI is owner of her studio for graphic designing and illustration. As a writer and illustrator for leading children's magazines, she has won a prize in the short-story category of the writer's competition and a consolation prize in the NOMA CONCORD picture book competition. Vandana is a graduate in applied art from the College of Art, Delhi. Stamps designing also claims her skills.

SUJASHA DASGUPTA is also allied with Vandana's studio. The 1986 commemorative stamp for Children's Day as well as a poster in the Poster Competition organised by Consumers' Forum for which she won a prize sees her active in the field of illustrating books and magazines and with emphasis on black and white drawings for books for older children. Sujasha is a graduate in Applied Arts from the College of Art, Delhi.

RAM WAEERKAR and cartoon illustration walk side by side. Childhood and later on till today saw him creating an unending feast of delights through his comic pictures. National awards have come to him. Ram's forte is figure drawing. Book jackets also show his skills.

ABID SURTI has an admiring circle

around him created by his now famous cartoon character, Dhabbuji. As a comics picture specialist, his series have been vastly projected. TV has telecast programmes by him. Abid is a graduate from the J.J. School of Art, Bombay. He has a rounded exposure to the world of painting, illustrating, writing and cartooning.

BODHRAJ is not unknown as a painter of Indian History the episodes from which decorate the Amritsar Golden Temple walls and that of the Sahitya Kala Parishad. His several one-man shows have brought him, amongst other awards, the Lalit Kala and H.H. Maharaja of Patiala awards. A portraiture artist par excellence, Bodhraj has studied art at Hoshiarpur.

SOUMITRO SARKAR'S emphasis of illustrations is for educational books for children. Different publishers have patronised him for his talents. Soumitro is a graduate from the College of Arts, Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi.

GEETA VADHERA has expressed her creativity in the field of Design and Fashion, having work exposures with a leading

Fashion House of France. Her research work in concrete pottery in West Germany and her publications on Art for children has carved a platform for her the field of commercial art. Geeta has received awards at the World Book Fair of 1988. She has been Head of the Department of arts at a leading public school of Delhi and has held art shows in India and abroad.

APARAJITA SINGH'S sojourns abroad for several years have given her a wide base to operate upon. Teaching art to children has come naturally to her. Children's stories in magazines and books have seen her vivid imagination blossoming and rewarded with appreciation. A graduate from the College of Art, Delhi, she set about to utilise her skills in free-lancing whilst still a collegiate.

As if to support their undisputed claims of being patrons of the Author and Illustrator, the AWIC is bringing out a book that deals with the complexities of the World of Indian Illustrators.
